

July 16, 2012

Chairman Michael Jackson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present:

Members: Jack Boyer, Gary Fitzherbert, Michael Jackson, Rex Swain, Craig Schoon

Alternates: A.J. Dubois, Liddy Adams

Selectman: Tony Bedini, Richard Carey

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Minutes:

Minutes of the June 18th meeting were approved.

Minutes of the June 19th Special Meeting (via phone with auditor) were amended to delete names of those not in attendance.

Taxes:

Tax Collector Tanya Wescott reported 99% of taxes have been collected for the 2011-12 fiscal year. Tax Collector's report was accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Linda McGarr's report was accepted as submitted.

Education:

Selectman and Board of Education member Tony Bedini reported on the positive response he has received from our new Superintendent of Schools, Pat Cosentino. He is looking forward to working with Dr. Cosentino and felt she is eager to meet and talk with the people of the Town.

Tony reported Dr. Cosentino will begin the review of the Education budget in August. He also reported that the firm of Castle Boos will begin their review of the Capital Needs Study with the architect at the high school. A Board of Education meeting is scheduled for 7/31 at the high school. It is anticipated technology at the schools will be discussed and teachers will be further educated in this area.

Ms. Cosentino will be asked to meet with the Planning Commission to discuss the revision of the Plan of Conservation and Development as it may relate to Education. Michael felt there are many good solutions to the problem of school population and this will be a good opportunity to talk with people/staff. The Board looks forward to working with Ms. Cosentino and feels she will be a real asset to the Region.

Finances:**Budget:**

The Board reviewed the financials. Question was raised about expenditures under "Unemployment Claims." It was noted that although there is not a particular line item budgeted for these costs, the Town has had to reimburse the State Unemployment Commission for former employees (full-and part-time) collecting unemployment. Some employees have been very part-time and hired on a seasonal basis. The Selectman's Office has investigated this ruling on several occasions, only to be told that it is the law.??? It was suggested this discussion be continued, perhaps through an attorney.

Accounting Procedures:

The Board discussed the accounting procedures of the Town, noting all funds are audited annually. All agreed the Board should be pro-active and provide due diligence over the Town accounts, with any reservations or questions duly addressed. It was noted there was no suggestion that any funds are not being handled honestly and forthrightly; but the Board wanted to ensure that all safeguards are in place and that previously written policies and procedures are adequate and amended if necessary.

Linda McGarr suggested each department review and rewrite its procedures for review by the auditor. She also suggested that accounting procedures should be followed to insure that there are adequate personnel available to carry out accounting procedures in the absence of others.

Once approved, the Policies & Procedures would be maintained and amended as necessary. All Town funds and procedures will be discussed in detail with the Town's auditor, whose responsibility it is to make the client aware that procedures must be established and followed, but may not make decisions on behalf of the Town.

Town Garage Site: Highways:

Gary Fitzherbert reported he had met with Tony Bedini, Mark Lyon, Kevin Smith and insurance representatives after the demolition and power washing at the town garage site had been completed. The cement expert felt the foundation of the building had been compromised and strongly recommended not using this as a foundation for a new garage. The cement was removed and recycled, which allowed a broader look at the current location. It was felt that the area where the garage had previously stood could be used for road rubble that is currently housed at the Titus Road site and the new garage could be located at a different location on the property. This will be reviewed further with the insurance company, etc.

Discussion also involved the future plans for the town highway system, which included the means used to judge the condition of the roads, the type of measurements used, as well as future decisions as to what the Town would like our future roads to be. Highway Director Kevin Smith and First Selectman Mark Lyon will be invited to the next Board of Finance meeting on August 20.

Cell Tower:

A Homeland Towers cell tower lease proposal is currently being reviewed by Town Council David Miles.7/27/2012

Plan of Conservation and Development:

The Planning Commission will begin holding meetings to discuss ideas for and revisions to the Town's Master Plan of Conservation and Development. These will be followed by a public hearing on Saturday, July 28th. The public is invited to attend all meetings and share their thoughts.

Rex Swain asked if the Planning Commission had discussed the de-funding of the Affordable Housing and Open Space line items in the current year's budget. Following the initial establishment of the Plan of Conservation and Development at a town meeting several years ago, specific funding for this purpose had also been approved. The consensus in 2003 was that people wanted to set aside a specific amount for five years to have assets available. Ten years later with a better understanding of housing and open space, the original premise may not be the same.

The Board felt the single issue of reduced numbers of school-age children must be addressed in the Plan. They noted there are fewer and fewer younger families in the public school system; and while it may be beyond the Planning Commission's purview to remark on this, it was suggested that the Commission contact the new Superintendent to talk about where education might fit into the Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Gollow
Finance Secretary